

## **United Nations Peacekeeping Reform**

### **Statement of**

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**Before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and**

**International Operations**

**Committee on International Relations**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

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Mr. Chairman, United Nations peacekeeping has gone through a period of extraordinary growth over the last two years. Since September 2003, new U.N. Peacekeeping missions, with total current troop levels over 33,000, have been created for Liberia, Burundi, Haiti, Cote d'Ivoire and Sudan. After careful scrutiny and due consultation within the administration and with the Congress, the United States voted in favor of the creation of each of those missions in the United Nations Security Council, because we have been satisfied that each one of them serves the national interest of the United States, is right-sized and includes an exit strategy. We strive to ensure that U.N. missions, which are being sent to operate in dangerous places, are properly trained, have adequate mandates, and are equipped and staffed to do what we ask of them.

In many cases, the United States has been the country to propose and lobby for U.N. peacekeeping. In many cases the fact that the U.N. has created a peacekeeping mission has served to stanch calls for the U.S. Armed Forces to become or remain militarily involved in yet another world hotspot.

There are certain inherent aspects of U.N. peacekeeping that prevent peacekeeping missions from performing at the level of a national unit of a militarily strong state. The United Nations, of course, has no standing forces, and nor would we want it to. The U.N. must therefore solicit troop contributions for individual U.N. peacekeeping operations from member states. Each U.N. peacekeeping mission is a separate entity. Each UN mission operates in different circumstances. The various national units made available for U.N. missions often operate such that they have little contact with other national units in the same mission. Many peacekeepers in a mission have never been part of a U.N. peacekeeping mission before. U.N. Peacekeeping does not enjoy the continuity or esprit de corps of a national army, and so there is much reinvention of the wheel each time a new mission is begun or a new unit rotates into an existing mission. None of this is amenable to a quick or lasting solution.

We nevertheless ask a great deal of U.N. peacekeepers. The theory and practice of UN peacekeeping mission has evolved enormously since the end of the Cold War. The blue-helmeted monitoring of a static ceasefire line is now largely a thing of the past. UN peacekeepers now find themselves regularly charged with the responsibility of protecting themselves and innocent civilians in their areas of operations. There are often calls for them to be more aggressive still against ill-pacified rebels and irregular units, and unfortunately U.N. peacekeepers are increasingly the target of hostile fire. It is a constant challenge for UN peacekeeping forces to maintain their neutrality and to avoid involvement in the local politics where they are deployed, even as they stand ready to act to protect themselves and, where so mandated, to protect innocent civilians. Over 1,900 personnel in U.N. peacekeeping operations have been killed in the course of their duties since 1948 – the most recent fatality was just last week in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Cases of sexual abuse and exploitation perpetrated by U.N. peacekeepers continue to come to light. These abhorrent, deplorable acts tarnish the reputation and effectiveness of U.N. peacekeeping, and demonstrate that both the U.N. and troop contributing countries need to strengthen their

efforts to detect and prevent abuse, and bolster enforcement of the highest standards of peacekeeper conduct.

We have insisted that military contingent commanders be held accountable and that troop contributing countries take action against their peacekeepers who perpetrate acts of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We support the U.N. Secretary-General's enforcement of the U.N. policy of zero-tolerance. We commend the work of the Secretary-General's special adviser, Prince Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, the Permanent Representative of Jordan, who crafted a comprehensive strategy with recommendations to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in U.N. peacekeeping operations.

We endorse the recommendations of the U.N. General Assembly's Special Committee on Peacekeeping to strengthen enforcement of a uniform U.N. code of conduct for peacekeepers, improve the capacity of the U.N. to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, broaden assistance to victims, and enhance pre-deployment training for U.N. peacekeepers.

We welcomed the creation of personal conduct units within the U.N.

Missions in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti to address allegations and to assist victims.

We will continue to address the issue forcefully with offending troop contributors and to advocate at the UN for system-wide reforms. Senior U.S. officials, including then-Secretary Powell, have raised our concerns at the highest levels of the U.N. Secretariat, within the Security Council, and in troop contributing countries. There is broad support for a strong response designed to end sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel in U.N. peacekeeping missions.

The August 2000 Brahimi Report on U.N. Peacekeeping, which was written as a response to failures of U.N. peacekeeping in Sierra Leone in 2000 when peacekeepers were taken hostage by a rebel group, made a series of important recommendations about the conduct of U.N. Peacekeeping. The State Department, and in particular the Bureau of International Organization Affairs, will undertake a thorough review of just where U.N. Peacekeeping stands five years after the recommendations of the Brahimi Report. Without prejudging the results of that study, I think it fair to say that the U.N. has

come a long way in responding to those recommendations, but that it still has a long way to go, and some of the Brahimi recommendations themselves are in need of reexamination.

The State Department takes its responsibilities with respect to U.N. peacekeeping and to the Congress and to the taxpayers very seriously. We keep U.N. peacekeeping operations under constant review. We resist calls to saddle U.N. peacekeeping from doing more than it can reasonably do because we want U.N. peacekeeping to succeed, not to fail. Circumstances sometimes require forces to be built up, and sometimes permit them to be reduced or closed. In the U.S. interagency process, we examine and critique the reports of the SYG on peacekeeping very seriously, taking them for what they are – recommendations. The final word on matters governing UN peacekeeping rests with the Security Council, and in many cases we work with our colleagues on the Council to pass resolutions that differ from the recommendations initially made by the Secretary-General. We also report to and consult with the interested Congressional committees both formally and informally on a regular basis on significant developments related to U.N. peacekeeping.

The U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations has necessarily built up its headquarters staff since 2000, and now has a best practices unit that attempts to assemble and publicize lessons learned from the U.N.'s ongoing peacekeeping experience.

U.N. Peacekeeping has clearly improved since 2000, but it just as clearly has great improvements still to make.

Once begun, U.N. peacekeeping missions are difficult to close. Local populations quickly grow used to the stabilizing presence of U.N. peacekeepers. Present as they are in some of the least developed places on earth, the local spending of U.N. missions and U.N. peacekeepers is also often a factor in the local desire to see them stay. Nevertheless, we have managed, over the last two years, to close one UN peacekeeping mission, UNIKOM on the Iraq-Kuwait border, and UNMISSET, the peacekeeping mission in Timor Leste, will wind up its operations this Friday. The peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, is on target to end this December. We will continue to work to ensure that the U.N. has exit strategies for its peacekeeping missions and that U.N. peacekeeping operations draw down as the mission mandates are fulfilled.

We are convinced that the U.N. can conduct peacekeeping more efficiently, and we are pursuing the details of the structure, manning and equipping of peacekeeping units in the context of the discussions of the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, which decides on budgetary matters.

I ask that the text of my statement be included in the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.